

## Meeting Management

As an Organization Development Consultant, I often emphasize one foundational part of creating a high performing work environment. That is, to provide your people the skills and tools to be productive and effective in group meetings. So much time and energy can be wasted in unproductive meetings, not to mention what that costs in lost productivity!

In the upcoming months in the Business Advocate, I hope to help you unlock the potential of your employees when they meet in groups whether it is simply to update each other, conduct project planning or creatively solve problems. You will hear about specific methods to improve meeting effectiveness from two standpoints: to maximize efficiency and encourage relevant participation so you can put that money where it counts! You will learn about:

- Why Meetings Fail
- Meeting Mechanics
- Meeting Roles
- Listening Skills
- Meeting Behaviors
- Meeting Evaluation
- Meeting Aids

Since meetings are an important part of conducting business, then why don't they work? Research on why meetings fail conducted by Donald L. Kirkpatrick, and published for the American Management Association reveals the following:

### 20 Reasons Why Meetings Fail

1. The leader fails to clearly define the meeting's objective.
2. The meeting is not scheduled at the convenience of the participants.
3. Inadequate arrangements have been made for participants' comfort (the room is not properly heated, cooled or ventilated; the chairs are uncomfortable; it's difficult to see or hear).
4. Participants are ill-prepared with ideas, information, materials or assignments due to unclear instructions or inadequate notice of the meeting.
5. The meeting gets off to a bad start by beginning late.
6. People who should be present are not, or some of those who are present have no reason to be at the meeting.
7. Participants sidetrack the discussion or play games that have the same effect.
8. The leader derails the discussion by departing from the agenda or losing sight of the objective.
9. One person dominates the discussion.
10. Members of the group argue among themselves or with the leader.

11. Attendees fail to express their opinions or to contribute meaningfully to the discussion.
12. Participants interrupt each other or the leader to make a point, or they engage in side conversations that exclude the group as a whole.
13. The leader intimidates, ridicules or badgers one or more of the participants.
14. Participants become confused or bored, causing their attention to wander.
15. Audiovisual or other equipment fails to work properly.
16. Poor acoustics, lighting, or the seating arrangements make it difficult to see and hear.
17. The meeting runs overtime and does not adjourn on schedule.
18. The meeting ends abruptly or just stops, leaving the group members unsure of what was achieved.
19. Participants are unclear about assignments, follow-up, or planned actions because of the lack of proper wrap-up.
20. People leave the meeting feeling dissatisfied or frustrated.

Be honest. Could see your employees, or even yourself, in any of these reasons? Well, fear not, help is on the way beginning in next months' Business Advocate.

*How to Conduct Productive Business Meetings*, 2d ed. (New York: AMACOM, 1987), page 32.

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